

Prepackaged bamboo fungi sample detected with excessive preservative and in breach of food labelling regulation

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (October 21) that a sample of prepackaged bamboo fungi was found to contain sulphur dioxide, a preservative, at a level exceeding the legal limit, and the functional class and name of the additive were not declared on the food label. Members of the public should not consume the affected batch of the product. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected batch of the product immediately if they possess it.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Bamboo fungi
Brand: (Not available in English)
Place of origin: China
Distributor: (Not available in English)
Net weight: 80 grams per pack
Best-before date: August 19, 2021

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample of bamboo fungi from a shop in Sha Tin for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 4 794.3 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 500 ppm. The functional class and name of the additive were also not declared on the food label," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularities and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batch of the product. The distributor concerned has initiated a recall according to the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call its hotline at 2580 1560 during office hours for enquiries about the recall. The CFS is also tracing the source of the affected product," the spokesman added.

Sulphur dioxide is a commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and salted fish products. Sulphur dioxide is water soluble, and most of it can be removed through washing and cooking. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience breathing difficulties, headache and nausea after consumption.

The spokesman reminded the food trade that the use of preservatives in food must comply with the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap 132BD). Furthermore, the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap 132W) require that for all prepackaged food for sale in Hong Kong containing

sulphite in a concentration of 10 ppm or more, the functional class of the sulphite and its name shall be specified in the list of ingredients. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment upon conviction.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.